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Letters

A U.S. 'Star Chamber' To Combat Leaks?

To the Editor:

The Congress flatly rejected the proposal drafted by Richard K. Willard at the Department of Justice to put 127,000 or so Government employees under the same type of prepublication review as former G.I.A. employees.

Now, Anthony Lewis reports that Mr. Willard has been testing another scheme on Capitol Hill ["A Lead Balloon," column Jan. 19]. This one would provide for \$5,000 fines for leaks of classified information, plus awards of damages to the Government, etc.

The determination of guilt would be made, not by judges, but in administrative hearings, to which only lawyers with security clearances could be admitted.

I am a former C.I.A. employee and a writer, and I agree that there has to be some sanction against those who could truly undermine our national security. But in his latest proposal, Mr. Willard has reached back to tactics that smack of the Court of Star Chamber in England, where libelers had their ears cut off. Mr. Willard proposes to cut out our tongues and maim our fingers behind closed doors.

I am more saddened than angered that such a proposal could be considered for even one minute. The noise you hear is Thomas Jefferson rolling over.

RICHARD C. RHODES
Dallas, Jan. 24, 1984